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A MODERN ARCADIA.

IN the Indian Ocean, some six hundred miles from the coast of Sumatra, there is one of those curious circular lagoon-islands of which one reads in stories of the South Seas. They are called atolls, and they confine a space of clear smooth water, while the surf breaks heavily on the outer or ocean side. In the case of the one to which we now refer, there is, on the northern side of the ring, an opening through which vessels can pass to a secure anchorage within. This ringlet of coral-land is sometimes called the Cocos, and sometimes the Keeling Islands. Little known to travellers and navigators, it is still less known to ordinary readers, even to those tolerably well acquainted with books of travel. But it possesses a history and natural characteristics which render it eminently worth a little attention.

Fifty years ago, Darwin visited the lagoon in the *Beagle*, and was struck with its peculiarity. 'The shallow, clear, and still water of the lagoon,' he wrote, 'resting in its greater part on white sand, is, when illumined by a vertical sun, of the most vivid green. This brilliant expanse, several miles in width, is on all sides divided, either by a line of snow-white breakers from the dark heaving waters of the ocean, or from the blue vault of heaven by the strips of land, crowned by the level tops of the cocoa-nut trees. As a white cloud here and there affords a pleasing contrast with the azure sky, so in the lagoon, bands of living coral darken the emerald green water. . . . On Direction Island, the strip of dry land is only a few hundred yards in width; on the lagoon side, there is a white calcareous beach; and on the outer coast, a solid broad flat of coral-rock, served to break the violence of the open sea. Excepting near the lagoon, where there is some sand, the land is entirely composed of rounded fragments of coral. In such a loose, dry, stony soil, the climate of the intertropical region alone could produce a vigorous vegetation. On some of the

smaller islets, nothing could be more elegant than the manner in which the young and full-grown cocoa-nut trees, without destroying each other's symmetry, were mingled into one wood. A beach of glittering white sand formed a border to these fairy spots.'

On this veritable fairy-ring, thrown up in mid-ocean, and basking alone in a wilderness of waters, Darwin applied himself to the study of coral formations, and evolved his theory of barrier-reefs. But the Keeling Islands have a deeper human interest, which we propose to evolve with the assistance of Mr H. O. Forbes, who has done so much for the cause of natural science in his wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago, and who is now about to penetrate the mysteries of the dark island of Papua.

It was in 1836 that Darwin visited the Cocos-Keeling Islands; and it was not until 1878 that Mr Forbes found his way thither from Batavia, the capital of Java, where he was botanising. The chance of a passage in a small sailing craft was eagerly seized; and after fourteen days of stormy combat with the monsoon in the Straits of Sunda, and sixteen days of baffling calms on the bosom of the Indian Ocean, the islands were at length reached. In the darkness of the night the little vessel crept cautiously through the narrow entrance into the safe anchorage of the lagoon, lighted only by the phosphorescence of countless shoals of fishes, which darted like rockets below the keel. The dawn revealed the extent of the island-lake, inclosed as by a palisade of palm-trees on a narrow ribbon of land, and the first feeling was one of astonishment that what appeared such a tiny speck in the huge waste of waters, should be able to hold its own against the mighty assaults of the ocean.

In a very short time Mr Forbes was carried off with delight by the monarch of the reef, and installed with honour in his hospitable abode, as the first European since Darwin who had of deliberate purpose visited the spot. And there he learned the strange history of the little community.

Among the many Scottish families wrecked in the Jacobite troubles of the '45' was one named Ross. A descendant of the family 'took to the sea,' and in the happier days in the first quarter of the present century, attained the command of one of the vessels stationed in the Java sea for the protection of British interests. At the close of 1825, this Captain Ross chanced upon the Keeling Islands, and struck with the advantage of their situation for the repair and provisioning of vessels voyaging to and from China, India, and Australia, took possession of the group. He went to England, and returned in 1827, to settle permanently, accompanied by his wife and six children, twelve Englishmen, one Javanese, and one Portuguese. But on landing, he found an interloper in possession of a third part of the group. This was an Englishman, named Alexander Hare, who had once held an official post in Borneo, which he had to leave on the re-instatement of the Dutch. In Borneo, Hare had assumed the state of an independent ruler, and driven from thence, sought some unoccupied spot where he could reassume the rôle. He pitched on Keeling, and took thither a large harem of diverse nationality, and a great retinue of slaves, whom he browbeat and treated generally in the orthodox oriental manner. He had accumulated a considerable fortune, and Ross found him living an indolent sensuous life in mock-regal style.

From the first, Hare exhibited great hostility to Captain Ross and his party, and the enterprising Scotchman found himself in considerable difficulty. He had drawn together his party on the understanding that the islands were his own, that there would be ample room for all, and that there would be no opposition in the developments of the resources. Finding a usurper in possession of one-third of the promised land, he could only offer to release his followers from their bargain. All but three—two men and a woman—accepted the release, and departed by a gunboat which happened to touch at the islands shortly after. Thus left with but three supporters besides his own family, the Scotchman's position was not enviable; but he did not lose heart. In time, he induced seven or eight persons to come to him from Java; and by-and-by a few Europeans, some being his own relatives, augmented the little settlement. Then he hired coolies in Batavia, and began a steady and lucrative trade in cocoa-nuts with Mauritius, Madras, Bencoolen, and various parts of the archipelago.

In the meantime, he was constantly annoyed and opposed by his neighbour Hare, who even tried to induce the officials at Batavia to come and forcibly annex the place to Holland. This attempt was unsuccessful, as was also that of Ross to induce the authorities at Mauritius to assume its protectorate. After this, Ross made direct application to King William to allow the atoll to be proclaimed British territory; but in this also he was unsuccessful. Finally, the vagabond Hare, tired of the idle life, vacated the place, and went to Singapore, where he died immediately afterwards. Mr Ross, thus left in undisturbed possession, soon became known in the archipelago as the King of the Cocos Islands.

It was while the settlement was in a state of transition, just after Hare had left, and while

Mr Ross was absent on business, that Darwin visited it, and formed a not very favourable opinion of its condition. But since then, a wonderful change has come over it, and when Mr Forbes paid his visit, the colony was prosperous and happy; for, with the assistance of his eldest son, Mr Ross soon brought about a perfect state of organisation. He had two villages built, one for the hired coolies, and the other for the European and other true colonists. He also built and acquired quite a fleet of vessels for the carrying on of the trade. That trade was almost uniformly prosperous, and left a handsome balance over year by year.

The great trouble was with the hired coolies. These had to be brought from Java, and had to be engaged for a term of years, the only ones who could be got being criminals who had served out their time in the chain-gangs of Batavia; that is to say, the worst and most dangerous class one could have anything to do with. As they far outnumbered the colonists, their presence was a constant menace and anxiety; but they could not be done without. A regular system of guard was therefore established, and watches were kept all night with military rigour and precision, the changes being marked as on board ship by the stroke of a bell.

The great dread was of incendiarism; for a fire would have destroyed not only the combustible dwellings, but also the new palm-trees themselves, which formed the wealth of the community. The colony was isolated on Home Island, and it was ordained penal for any one to spend the night elsewhere. Every boat was numbered, and had to be hauled into its place an hour before sunset. At nightfall, the roll was called; any absentees were at once noted, and a search instantly made for them. Yet, notwithstanding these precautions, some of the crime-stained coolies would still occasionally manage to escape on to the other islets, and keep the settlement in suspense for weeks; or would run riot through the village and endanger the lives of all. But in time the chain-gang men were all got rid of, and a change in the laws of Batavia enabled the Rosses to select their own coolies. They took care to engage only those of the best character.

The present Monarch of Keeling is the grandson of the original proprietor. He was educated at home, and was, in fact, studying engineering in Glasgow, when the news of a great disaster summoned him to the assistance of his father. A terrible cyclone had broken on the group and completely wrecked the settlement. In the midst of the distress, the father died; and young Ross was left alone to grapple with misfortune and revive the broken spirit of the colony. This was in 1862; and now the place bears evidence of his energy and talent for administration.

He cleared away the unprofitable forest, planted the ground with palms, imported machinery, and set up steam-mills and smithies, and established a school, under the charge of a younger brother, who had been educated at a Scottish university. His wife, who was born in the islands, shared all his ideas and interests; and the two, says Mr Forbes, 'became the parents of the people, rather than their masters and rulers.'

The ordinary work of all is in gathering the nuts and preparing the oil—which are sent to Batavia, and there exchanged for grain and other necessities which the islanders cannot produce for themselves. But besides his ordinary duties, every man has to learn to work in wood, iron, and brass; and every girl has to undergo in Mrs Ross's house an apprenticeship in sewing, cooking, and other domestic arts of the European pattern. It will interest our lady readers to learn that Mr Forbes declares he never met with more perfectly trained servants anywhere.

In this modern Arcadia there is no money to tempt men to robbery. The satanic glamour of gold is not allowed to sully the purity and tranquillity of the little community; and if silver exists at all, it is but in the shape of a few trifling ornaments. Instead of money, Mr Ross has devised a currency of sheep-skin notes signed by himself. Wages and imports are alike paid for in these notes, which can only be exchanged for Dutch money on presentation to Mr Ross's agent in Batavia. It is obviously useless to steal these notes, because any vessel by which the thief could reach Batavia would also carry instructions to the agent to refuse payment of them.

Each family has a comfortably furnished plank-built house inclosed in a little garden; and each has one or more boats carefully housed in a shed by the water's side. These boats are their pride and delight, and the constant source of a friendly emulation in respect of speed or elegance of shape or superiority of finish. The people are as much at home on the sea as on the land, and thus the boats are almost as important to them as the houses.

The village where the hired coolies live is apart. It is well and neatly kept, the dwellings are comfortable, and the people are treated kindly and liberally. In the event of the death of a head of a family, the children are either sent back to the father's native place, or allowed to remain and become Cocos people, according as the widow may elect.

Midway between the villages—the language spoken in both of which is Malay, although English is understood by most of the Cocos people—is the house of Mr Ross. It is large, comfortable, and surrounded by a high wall, inclosing a large garden, luxuriant with fruit-trees, flowering shrubs, and roses. Here lives the proprietor with his family; and here also are accommodated several of his brothers, associated with him in the management of the community.

The relations between 'The House' and the Cocos village, we are told, are of the most cordial and affectionate character, and constant evidence of it came before the notice of Mr Forbes while residing among them. A death of any member of the colony is felt by all as a family loss. Says Mr Forbes: 'That in their relations one with another there should be perfection, is not to be expected; but a finer and more upright community I have never known, nor a simpler or more guileless people—many of whom have never known and never seen a world wider than their own atoll, which can be surveyed in a single glance of the eye; and I feel more than half confident that the English service for the dead has been said over, and that beneath the coral shingle of

Grave Islet there rest, as blameless lives as perhaps our weak humanity can attain to.'

But it is not free from its share in the troubles which are the lot of humanity, and it has some peculiarly its own. We have spoken of one terrible disaster in the time of Ross the Second. Another occurred during the reign of Ross the Third. Towards the end of January 1876—when the population of the islands numbered some five hundred native-born—an abnormal fall in the barometer indicated some great atmospheric disturbance. On the 28th it fell to twenty-eight inches, and the boats were all hauled up into a place of safety. The same afternoon a dark bank of clouds appeared in the western sky, and before evening the cyclone burst. Every house in both villages was swept away; the storehouses and mills, just completed, were dismantled and gutted; great patches of trees were thrown down or carried away entirely; and a great wave carried a ship bodily on to the spot where Ross's house had stood. The only shelter was to be found in hollows of the ground, and there the people crouched, everything having an elevation of over a foot or two being swept away or blown down.

When the morning broke calm and clear, not a speck of green was to be seen on the whole circle of the islets, and the solid coral was broken into fragments on the beach. Thirty-six hours later, the water of the eastern side of the lagoon began to rise and to show a peculiar dark colour. The inky liquid had the smell of rotten eggs, and it continued to spread for fourteen days, until it had extended almost quite round the lagoon. Many fish in the waters impregnated with this liquid died in a few hours, and so great was the quantity of poisoned fish thrown upon the beach, that it took three weeks of hard work to bury them. Then the deathly stream gradually passed away. It is supposed to have issued from some submarine volcano, an eruption of which had caused the frightful tidal wave that submerged the settlement.

In six months, however, tree and shrub were clothed in verdure again; and before the end of three years, fruit was being yielded in as great abundance as before. Such is the recuperative force of nature in these latitudes! When Mr Forbes visited the islands only two years after, the traces of the disaster were rapidly disappearing, and the whole settlement seemed the ideal of a peaceful and happy colony.

Since Mr Darwin's visit half a century ago, not only has the physical configuration altered, but the flora and fauna have multiplied greatly. Mr Forbes gives many interesting notes on these subjects, which, however, are not available for the present article.

Both Darwin and Forbes were struck with the wonderful provision of nature in the case of the *Birgus latro*, or great cocoa-nut crab. This is one of the largest of the species of land-crabs, and it feeds almost exclusively on cocoa-nuts, for which purpose its pincer-claws are developed to extraordinary power, capable of breaking a cocoa-nut shell or a man's limb. Although it climbs the trees, it does not pull the fruit, but feeds upon what falls to the ground. With its great claws, it tears off the husk from the nut, and then selecting the one of the three

eye-spots which is always the more easily pierced, probes it with one of its legs. Inserting the leg, it rotates the nut until the orifice is large enough to permit the insertion of its great claws to break up the shell and extract the contents with comfort. Feeding on such nutritious diet, the *Birgus* accumulates a great deal of rich fat, which yields sometimes as much as two pints of oil. This oil, thickened in the sun, forms an excellent substitute for butter, and is also a most excellent anti-corrosive.

Another interesting denizen of the Keelings is the pure white tern (*Gygis candida*), which is to the settlers as the swallow is to us. Most curious are its domestic arrangements. It builds no nest; but the female will deposit her solitary egg upon the extended leaf of a young cocoa-nut palm. There it rests securely amid the twisting and heaving of the leaves in the wind, and while the leaf, as in all palms, droops steadily downward to its fall. The process is often watched with keen attention by the settlers, who will sometimes good-humouredly bet on the probabilities, when they see a tern sitting on a rapidly withering leaf. But we are told that the betting is always in favour of the bird; if the leaf falls in the afternoon, the young bird will have emerged from the egg in the morning!

But we have not space to dwell on all the wonderful varieties of vegetable, animal, and marine life of this remarkable lagoon-island. We have said enough to show that Mr Forbes is right in disputing the universal applicability of Dana's statement, that 'notwithstanding all the products and all the attractions of a coral island, even in its best condition it is but a miserable place for human development, physical, mental, or moral.' In the Keeling atoll, on the contrary, we find a healthy, happy, contented, prosperous, and singularly moral people, living a life of continuous industry, untroubled by the turmoil of the outer world, undisturbed by political discussions, and unsullied by avarice. Here, indeed, is a prosperous patriarchal State, an actual Modern Arcadia.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LADY MARKHAM received young Gaunt with the most gracious kindness: had his mother seen him seated in the drawing-room at Eaton Square, with Frances hovering about him full of pleasure and questions, and her mother insisting that he should stay to luncheon, and Markham's hansom just drawing up at the door, she would have thought her boy on the highway to fortune. The sweetness of the two ladies, the happy eagerness of Frances, and Lady Markham's grace and graciousness, had a soothing effect upon the young man. He had been unwilling to come, as he was unwilling to go anywhere at this crisis of his life; but it soothed him, and filled him with a sort of painful and bitter pleasure to be thus surrounded by all that was most familiar to Constance, by her mother and sister, and all their questions about her. These questions, indeed, it was hard upon him to be obliged to answer; but yet that

pain was the best thing that now remained to him, he said to himself. To hear her name, and all those allusions to her, to be in the rooms where she had spent her life—all this gave food to his longing fancy, and wrung, yet soothed, his heart.

'My dear, you will worry Captain Gaunt with your questions; and I don't know those good people, Tasie and the rest; you must let me have my turn now.—Tell me about my daughter, Captain Gaunt. She is not a very good correspondent. She gives few details of her life; and it must be so very different from life here. Does she seem to enjoy herself? Is she happy and bright? I have longed so much to see some one, impartial, whom I could ask.'

Impartial! If they only knew! 'She is always bright,' he said with a suppressed passion, the meaning of which Frances divined suddenly, almost with a cry, with a start and thrill of sudden certainty, which took away her breath. 'But for happy, I cannot tell. It is not good enough for her, out there.'

'No?—Thank you, Captain Gaunt, for appreciating my child. I was afraid it was not much of a sphere for her.—What company has she?—Is there anything going on—?'

'Mamma,' said Frances, 'I told you—there is nothing going on.'

The young soldier shook his head. 'There is no society—except the Durants—and ourselves—who are not interesting,' he said, with a somewhat ghastly smile.

'The Durants are the clergyman's family?—and yourselves. I think she might have been worse off.—I am sure Mrs Gaunt has been kind to my wayward girl,' she said, looking him in the face with that charming smile.

'Kind!' he cried, as if the word were a profanation. 'My mother is too happy to do—anything.—But Miss Waring,' he added with a feeble smile, 'has little need of—any one. She has so many resources—she is so far above'—

He got inarticulate here, and stumbled in his speech, growing very red. Frances watched him under her eyelids with a curious sensation of pain. He was very much in earnest, very sad, yet transported out of his languor and misery by Constance's name. Now, Frances had heard of George Gaunt for years, and had unconsciously allowed her thoughts to dwell upon him, as has been mentioned in another part of this history. His arrival, had it not happened in the midst of other excitements which preoccupied her, would have been one of the greatest excitements she had ever known. She remembered now that when it did happen, there had been a faint almost imperceptible touch of disappointment in it, in the fact that his whole attention was given to Constance, and that for herself, Frances, he had no eyes. But in the moment of seeing him again, she had forgotten all that, and had gone back to her previous prepossession in his favour, and his mother's certainty that Frances and her George would be 'great friends.'—Now, she understood with instant divination the whole course of affairs. He had given his heart to Constance, and she had not prized the gift. The discovery gave her an acute yet vague (if that could be) impression

of pain. It was she, not Constance, that had been prepossessed in his favour. Had Constance not been there, no doubt she would have been thrown much into the society of George Gaunt—and—who could tell what might have happened? All this came before her like the sudden opening of a landscape hid by fog and mists. Her eyes swept over it, and then it was gone. And this was what never had been, and never would be.

'Poor Con,' said Lady Markham. 'She never was thrown on her own resources before.—Has she so many of them? It must be a curiously altered life for her, when she has to fall back upon what you call her resources.—But you think she is happy?' she asked with a sigh.

How could he answer? The mere fact that she was Constance, seemed to Gaunt a sort of paradise. If she could make him happy by a look or a word, by permitting him to be near her, how was it possible that being herself, she could be otherwise than blessed? He was well enough aware that there was a flaw in his logic somewhere, but his mind was not strong enough to perceive where that flaw was.

Markham came in in time to save him from the difficulty of an answer. Markham did not recollect the young man, whom he had only seen once; but he hailed him with great friendliness, and began to inquire into his occupations and engagements. 'If you have nothing better to do, you must come and dine with me at my club,' he said in the kindest way, for which Frances was very grateful to her brother. And young Gaunt for his part began to gather himself together a little. The presence of a man roused him. There is something, no doubt, seductive and relaxing in the fact of being surrounded by sympathetic women, ready to divine and to console. He had not braced himself to bear the pain of their questions; but somehow, had felt a certain luxury in letting his despondency, his languor, and displeasure with life appear. 'I have to be here,' he had said to them, 'to see people, I believe. My father thinks it necessary: and I could not stay; that is, my people are leaving Bordighera. It becomes too hot to hold one—they say.'

'But you would not feel that, coming from India?'

'I came to get braced up,' he said with a smile, as of self-ridicule, and made a little pause. 'I have not succeeded very well in that,' he added presently. 'They think England will do me more good. I go back to India in a year; so that, if I can be braced up, I should not lose any time.'

'You should go to Scotland, Captain Gaunt. I don't mean at once, but as soon as you are tired of the season—that is the place to brace you up—or to Switzerland, if you like that better.'

'I do not much care,' he had said with another melancholy smile, 'where I go.'

The ladies tried every way they could think of to console him, to give him a warmer interest in his life. They told him that when he was feeling stronger, his spirits would come back. 'I know how one runs down when one feels out of sorts,' Lady Markham said. 'You must let us try to amuse you a little, Captain Gaunt.'

But when Markham came in, this softness

came to an end. George Gaunt picked himself up, and tried to look like a man of the world. He had to see some one at the Horse Guards; and he had some relations to call upon; but he would be very glad, he said, to dine with Lord Markham. It surprised Frances that her mother did not appear to look with any pleasure on this engagement. She even interposed in a way which was marked. 'Don't you think, Markham, it would be better if Captain Gaunt and you dined with me? Frances is not half satisfied. She has not asked half her questions. She has the first right to an old friend.'

'Gaunt is not going away to-morrow,' said Markham. 'Besides, if he's out of sorts, he wants amusing, don't you see?'

'And we are not capable of doing that.—Frances, do you hear?'

'Very capable, in your way. But for a man, when he's low, ladies are dangerous—that's my opinion, and I've a good deal of experience.'

'Of low spirits, Markham!'

'No, but of ladies,' he said with a chuckle. 'I shall take him somewhere afterwards; to the play perhaps, or—somewhere amusing; whereas you would talk to him all night, and Fan would ask him questions, and keep him on the same level.'

Lady Markham made a reply which to Frances sounded very strange. She said: 'To the play—perhaps?' in a doubtful tone, looking at her son. Gaunt had been sitting looking on in the embarrassed and helpless way in which a man naturally regards a discussion over his own body as it were, particularly if it is a conflict of kindness, and, glad to be delivered from this friendly duel, turned to Frances with some observation, taking no heed of Lady Markham's remark. But Frances heard it with a confused premonition which she could not understand. She could not understand, and yet— She saw Markham shrug his shoulders in reply; there was a slight colour upon his face, which ordinarily knew none. What did they both mean?

But how elated would Mrs Gaunt have been, how pleased the general, had they seen their son at Lady Markham's luncheon-table in the midst, so to speak, of the first society! Sir Thomas came in to lunch, as he had a way of doing; and so did a gay young Guardsman, who was indeed naturally a little contemptuous of a man in the line, yet civil to Markham's friend. These simple old people would have thought their George on the way to every advancement, and believed even the heart-break which had procured him that honour well compensated. These were far from his own sentiments; yet, to feel himself thus warmly received by *her* people, the object of so much kindness, which his deluded heart whispered must surely, surely, whatever she might intend, have been suggested at least by something she had said of him, was balm and healing to his wounds. He looked at her mother—and indeed Lady Markham was noted for her graciousness, and for looking as if she meant to be the motherly friend of all who approached her—with a sort of adoration. To be the mother of Constance, and yet to speak to ordinary mortals with that smile, as if she had no more to be proud of than they!

And what could it be that made her so kind? Not anything in him—a poor soldier, a poor soldier's son, knowing nothing but the exotic society of India and its curious ways—surely something which, out of some relenting of the heart, some pity or regret, Constance had said. Frances sat next to him at table, and there was a more subtle satisfaction still in speaking low, aside to Frances, when he got a little confused with the general conversation, that bewildering talk which was all made up of allusions. He told her that he had brought a parcel from the Palazzo, and a box of flowers from the bungalow—that his mother was very anxious to hear from her, that they were going to Switzerland—no, not coming home, this year. 'They have found a cheap place in which my mother delights,' he said with a faint smile. He did not tell her that his coming home a little circumscribed their resources, and that the month in town which they were so anxious he should have, which in other circumstances he would have enjoyed so much, but which now he cared nothing for, nor for anything, was the reason why they had stopped half-way on their usual summer journey to England. Dear old people, they had done it for him—this was what he thought to himself, though he did not say it—for him, for whom nobody could now do anything! He did not say much, but as he looked in Frances's sympathetic eyes, he felt that without saying a word to her, she must understand it all.

Lady Markham made no remark about their visitor until after they had done their usual afternoon's 'work,' as it was her habit to call it, their round of calls, to which she went in an exact succession, saying lightly as she cut short each visit, that she could stay no longer, as she had so much to do. There was always a shop or 'two to go to, in addition to the calls, and almost always some benevolent errand—some Home to visit, some hospital to call at, something about the work of poor ladies, or the salvation of poor girls—all these were included along with the calls in the afternoon's work. And it was not till they had returned home and were seated together at tea, refreshing themselves after their labours, that she mentioned young Gaunt. She then said, after a minute's silence, suddenly, as if the subject had been long in her mind: 'I wish Markham had let that young man alone; I wish he had left him to you and me.'

Frances started a little, and felt, with great self-indignation and distress, that she blushed—though why, she could not tell. She looked up, wondering, and said: 'Markham! I thought it was so very kind.'

'Yes, my dear; I believe he means to be kind.'

'Oh, I am sure he does; for he could have no interest in George Gaunt, not for himself. I thought it was perhaps for my sake, because he was—because he was the son of—such a friend.'

'Were they so good to you, Frances? And no doubt to Con too.'

'I am sure of it, mamma.'

'Poor people,' said Lady Markham; 'and this is the reward they get. Con has been experi-

menting on that poor boy.—What do I mean by experimenting? You know well enough what I mean, Frances. I suppose he was the only man at hand, and she has been amusing herself. He has been dangleing about her constantly, I have no doubt, and she has made him believe that she liked it as well as he did. And then he has made a declaration, and there has been a scene. I am sorry to say I need no evidence in this case: I know all about it.—And now, Markham! Poor people, I say. It would have been well for them if they had never seen one of our race.'

'Mamma!' cried Frances with a little indignation, 'I feel sure you are misjudging Constance. What would she do anything so cruel for? Papa used to say that one must have a motive.'

'He said so! I wonder if he could tell what motives were his when— Forgive me, my dear. We will not discuss your father. As for Con, her motives are clear enough—amusement.—Now, my dear, don't! I know you were going to ask me, with your innocent face, what amusement it could possibly be to break that young man's heart. The greatest in the world, my love! We need not mince matters between ourselves. There is nothing that diverts Con so much, and many another woman. You think it is terrible; but it is true.'

'I think—you must be mistaken,' said Frances, pale and troubled, with a little gasp as for breath. 'But,' she went on, 'supposing even that you were right about Con, what would Markham do?'

Lady Markham looked at her very gravely. 'He has asked this poor young fellow—to dinner,' she said.

Frances could scarcely restrain a laugh, which was half hysterical. 'That does not seem very tragic,' she said.

'O no, it does not seem very tragic—poor people, poor people!' said Lady Markham, shaking her head.

And there was no more; for a visitor appeared—one of a little circle of ladies who came in and out every day, intimates, who rushed up-stairs and into the room without being announced, always with something to say about the Home or the Hospital or the Reformatory or the Poor Ladies or the endangered girls. There was always a great deal to say about these institutions, which formed an important part of the 'work' which all these ladies had to do. Frances withdrew to a little distance, so as not to embarrass her mother and her friend, who were discussing 'cases' for one of those refuges of suffering humanity, and were more comfortable when she was out of hearing. Frances knitted and thought of home—not this bewildering version of it, but the quiet of the idle village life where there was no 'work,' but where all were neighbours, lending a kindly hand to each other in trouble, and where the tranquil days flew by she knew not how. She thought of this with a momentary, oft-recurring secret protest against this other life, of which, as was natural, she saw the evil more clearly than the good; and then, with a bound, her thoughts returned to the extraordinary question to which her mother had made so extraordinary a reply. What could Markham do? 'He has asked the poor young

fellow to dinner.' Even now, in the midst of the painful confusion of her mind, she almost laughed. Asked him to dinner! How would that harm him? At Markham's club there would be no poisoned dishes—nothing that would slay. What harm could it do to George Gaunt to dine with Markham? She asked herself the question again and again, but could find no reply. When she turned to the other side and thought of Constance, the blood rushed to her head in a feverish angry pain. Was that also true? But in this case, Frances, like her mother, felt that no doubt was possible. In this respect she had been able to understand what her mother said to her. Her heart bled for the poor people, whom Lady Markham compassionated without knowing them, and wondered how Mrs Gaunt would bear the sight of the girl who had been cruel to her son. All that with agitation and trouble she could believe. But Markham! What could Markham do?

She was going to the play with her mother that evening, which was to Frances, fresh to every real enjoyment, one of the greatest of pleasures. But she did not enjoy it that night. Lady Markham paid little attention to the play; she studied the people as they went and came, which was a usual weakness of hers, much wondered at and deplored by Frances, to whom the stage was the centre of attraction. But on this occasion Lady Markham was more distraite than ever, levelling her glass at every new group that appeared at all the moments of the recesses between the acts, the restless crowd which is always in motion. Her face, when she removed the glass from it, was anxious and almost unhappy. 'Frances,' she said, in one of these pauses, 'your eyes must be sharper than mine, try if you can see Markham anywhere.'

'Here is Markham,' said her son, opening the door of the box.—'What does the mother want with me, Fan?'

'Oh, you are here!' Lady Markham cried, leaning back in her chair with a sigh of relief. 'And Captain Gaunt too.'

'Quite safe, and out of the way of mischief,' said Markham with a chuckle, which brought the colour to his mother's cheek.

TURF-BEDDING.

At what time peat, or peat-moss as it has more generally been called, was first used for the purpose of bedding cattle and horses, it is impossible to say. Doubtless, it has been frequently so used in country places when straw was scarce; but it is only about four years ago that it was introduced to us as an article of commerce, and even then was brought forward by our German cousins. In the last week of March 1881, a firm in Bremen sent over to London two bales of what they termed 'turf-bedding for horses and all other animals.' The bales weighed about two hundredweight each, and were inclosed in rough canvas like wool; a system of baling which was afterwards much improved on. At first, considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the London horse-owners to give the new article

a trial; but gradually their scruples were overcome, and the turf-bedding obtained a footing in the metropolis, and very soon after found its way to other large towns both in England and Scotland.

After the first difficulties of securing the patronage of buyers had been overcome, peat-moss or turf-bedding took rapid strides for a time, as far at least as its importation was concerned. The price, which at first was seventy shillings per ton, fell rapidly to forty shillings per ton, and then, owing to the heavy stocks in the country, to almost whatever buyers chose to offer. Inferior qualities, too, were as a matter of course shipped, and buyers grew dissatisfied. The inferiority consisted in the peat-bog having been cut too deeply, and the hard or fuel-peat used. This weighed more heavily certainly, but was not at all suited to the purpose, as, besides being most uncomfortable for the horses to lie on, was not nearly so absorbent. This, however, has been rectified, and the bedding-proper is now being regularly used by some of the largest consumers in London, Glasgow, and other towns, who find it advantageous in many ways, and speak highly in its favour; while, on the other hand, there are others who will have nothing to do with it; and certainly so long as straw is cheap, there is little inducement to depart from the established order of things in that respect. The manufacture of this litter was tried in 1882 on a peat-bog between Edinburgh and Glasgow, belonging to Mr John Pender, M.P.; but, for some reason or other, the experiment was a failure, and it was soon abandoned.

The first bales to arrive in this country were shipped, as already stated, from Bremen, and were the product of a bog at Zwischenahn, near Oldenburg, which was particularly well adapted for the purpose, the upper strata being of a perfectly spongy character, and almost wholly free from the semi-decomposed wood, &c., so commonly found near the surface of peat-bogs.

The process of preparation being similar at all factories, a slight sketch of that of one will serve for all. The peat is cut, dried in the sun, and stacked in the same way as that used for fuel. It is then put into a cutting-machine, composed of two iron rollers, which revolve in opposite directions, and are fitted with teeth of from three to four inches in length, so placed that the teeth of the one roller pass between those of the other, the space between each being according to the size of pieces required. After passing through this operation the peat is thrown into powerful presses, in which it is compressed into bales of from two and a half to three hundredweight each. Wooden slots of about half an inch in thickness, three inches in breadth, and of the full length of the bale, are placed at the top and bottom, and the whole bound round with wires, of which four or six are generally used for each bale. When the foregoing process is properly carried out, the bales stand the carriage to this country with very little breakage.

From its absorbent and deodorising properties, this peat-moss, or turf, is no doubt well suited for the purpose to which it is applied, and makes a dry and comfortable bed for horses; but whether an economical one or not, depends of

course on its price as compared with that of straw.

When of the proper quality and thoroughly dried, it will absorb about six times its own weight of water; but any one wishing to give this litter a trial, should bed his horses with the same degree of comfort that he has been in the habit of doing with straw, and so test the difference between them for himself.

The peat used is the upper spongy stratum, which, when dried, is of a light-brown colour and of a very absorbent nature, and should be as free as possible from all half-decayed vegetable matter.

MR L'ESTRANGE.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CONCLUSION.

EXPOSURE to the strong air of the ocean began to make me drowsy; I went down to my cabin to get a little sleep. Theodore had not left his berth. The unhappy boy was very ill, and looked so despondent that he took all thoughts of sleep away from me. I was more grieved by his sufferings than by his folly, and exerted myself to the utmost to comfort him.

After leaving him again, I stood at the port-hole, breathing the soft air. A gentle touch upon the arm roused me from my contemplation. I turned, and saw one of the stewards with a letter in his hand for me. Greatly surprised, I opened the envelope, and found the contents ran thus: 'L'Estrange has your money. He is a professional gambler, working with confederates. Go to him; declare that you know him and his associates; and that if he does not restore your money, you will bring the police to your assistance, when you reach New York. Be firm, and fear not; for though he is a man of desperate courage, he will not dare to harm you while on this ship. If you cannot force him to yield by such arguments as suggest themselves to you, use the words "Henry Evans."'

I read this extraordinary missive over a dozen times at least, each reperusal adding to my amazement. Who was the writer, and why was I enlightened as to L'Estrange's real character? My suspicions had been right, then—the man was a beast of prey! No time must be lost. I had an unpleasant scene before me, and had better get it over without delay. I went on deck at once, examining all that met my view from the companion-door. L'Estrange was not visible. I went slowly round the decks, into the smoke-room; but did not find him. I descended to the saloon; and at the far end he sat writing at the table set apart for that purpose. Near him were several other gentlemen, one of them the young man I had spoken to at the beginning of the voyage. All were writing or reading. As I stood before L'Estrange, the gentlemen lifted their heads and eyed me inquiringly.

'Can I have five minutes' conversation with you, sir?' I demanded from L'Estrange.

He started, paled for an instant, looked hurriedly round the table, then smiled. 'I should be happy to oblige you, sir,' he answered in a level voice; 'but I am writing just now.'

'Be good enough to suspend it; my business is urgent.'

'What do you want?' he asked, half scowling.

'I cannot tell you here; your cabin is the fittest place for what I have to say.'

L'Estrange looked at me searchingly, while he pretended to smile, as if amused at my queer invitation. 'Can't you wait for half an hour?'

'No; not for half a minute.'

'Well, you are a very curious person, I must say. I will grant your request, though it is inconvenient. I suppose you want to talk about your brother?'

I bowed.

L'Estrange rose up, cast a careless glance upon the people sitting round, and led the way down the saloon. 'We did not exchange a word until he had got into the cabin, which was amidships; then he said, bolting the door: "Be quick with your conversation, for I shall not spare more than the five minutes you ask for." He spoke haughtily, almost threateningly.'

'One minute will accomplish my purpose,' I replied, looking at him sternly. 'The length of the conversation will depend upon you, not on me. Give me the four hundred and fifteen pounds you have taken from my brother.'

A cool cynical smile was the response to my demand. 'Are you a fool or a knave, young man?' asked L'Estrange, after a moment. 'I have lost three times as much as your brother; why, then, should I give you money that I have neither won nor stolen.'

'Do not assume such an air with me,' I cried angrily. 'I know you.'

'Indeed! Then, if you know Mr L'Estrange, banker of Wall Street, New York, you should know that he is a gentleman of honour. But the five minutes are nearly at an end.'

'I care not for time; I am here to obtain my money; for it is not my brother's; he stole it from my portmanteau.'

'Look here, young man,' said L'Estrange, coming close to me, and staring hard into my eyes—'look here. I tell you, as a gentleman, that I have not got any money of yours; and, I vow, if you come any of your tricks over me, I will hand you over to the captain as a swindling scoundrel, trying to extort money by threats.—There is the door, sir; leave my cabin.' The manner of the man was so imposing, and the evidence of his nature so truculent, that for a few seconds I was almost intimidated.

L'Estrange perceived his advantage, and put his hand upon my shoulder to thrust me outside. That touch brought back my courage. 'Keep your hands off me!' I cried passionately. 'If you cannot persuade me to leave this room, you will never put me out by force. Again, I demand the money you have stolen, under the semblance of gaming.'

A look of savage hatred grew slowly over L'Estrange's sinister features. He remained awhile thinking, though he pretended to wait my resumption of the conversation. A flash of resolution at length blazed in his dark eyes as he said: 'You may thank my self-command, young man, for not kicking you out of this, as I would a whining hound. For your brother's sake, I will not do you any harm. But if I had you ashore, I would give you a lesson that would teach you to behave like a gentleman. Do not provoke me any more. Leave my cabin.'

'I will never leave it till you have given me the money; or if you go out, I will follow you, and before all the passengers, I will repeat what I have said. I care not for your scowls, for your hatred, for any harm your vile ingenuity can devise against me.'

'Then, as you declare war to the knife, you mad fool, you shall have it,' cried L'Estrange with a burst of imprecations. 'I am known on this ship to many gentlemen and to the captain. I shall claim protection from a scoundrel who seeks to fasten a quarrel upon me, to extort a large sum of money; and when we get into the Hudson, I will put the constables on you. If it costs me a thousand dollars, I will shut you up in jail for the next few years.'

I laughed, a scornful, stinging laugh of contempt.

L'Estrange was nonplussed.

'I accept your war to the knife,' I said. 'Come, let us place the matter before the captain and the saloon passengers. I have only made a formal demand for my money so far. I thought that you would see the wisdom of returning your plunder, when you discovered that I knew you and your profession. I do not want the trouble of prosecuting you when we land at New York. I have urgent business to attend to elsewhere, and I would prefer that other hands than mine put you under the jailer's key. However, since you decide to play the innocent and the respectable, I must join in your comedy. It certainly will be the best for society. You and your confederates on this ship are at my mercy. War to the knife, it shall be.' I turned to unfasten the door.

'Stop!' said L'Estrange uneasily.

'Are you going to restore the money?'

'Sit down, and let us talk the matter over. I have a hasty temper, and your request has made me very angry. Let us be friends. I really am a greater victim than your brother; I have lost quite a heap of money. Why did he think I was a professional gambler? Why has he acted so unjustly towards me? I am no pretender to respectability, I assure you. Here is my card. When you reach New York, you will find in ten minutes that I am what I say I am.'

'Pray, do not continue this sort of fiction. I know all about you, Mr L'Estrange. Neither your bluster nor your hypocrisy will turn me from my point. You have only one argument that can prevail with me—that is, to put four hundred and fifteen pounds in unmistakable currency into my hands.'

He glared at me like a ferocious animal in a trap. Then he assumed an amused smile, saying: 'Well, I have had a pretty fair experience of human nature; but I tell you, sir, you are the toughest opponent I have met so far.'

'I am a desperate man, Mr L'Estrange. You and your gang have ruined me, and blasted my brother's career at the start. If I had thought that an appeal to your pity would have caused a restoration of all we have in the world, that appeal would have been made. But the professional gambler has no heart and no conscience, except that which is roused by the policeman. Yet, why am I bandying words with you? Give me the money.'

'Upon my honour as a gentleman, I am very sorry about this affair. I will see what I can do to get the money from Mr Barker and the others who have cleaned your brother's pockets. I give you my promise.' L'Estrange rose, as if to end the interview, and looked at me with a reassuring smile.

'I do not take promissory notes in such transactions as ours,' I said sternly. 'The money!'

'You shall have it before ten o'clock to-night,' quoth L'Estrange, putting out his hand to ratify the pledged words.

'I will not wait ten seconds. The money!'

'I cannot give it to you; I swear I cannot; I have lost all my ready cash. But since you will not treat me as one gentleman does another, I will give you a draft upon my firm, to be paid upon arrival. I am sick and tired of this absurd row. Go into the saloon; I will write the draft, and follow you.'

'I take no draft from a man of your stamp, Mr L'Estrange; all your subterfuges are useless.'

'If I had you ashore, I would take the tall talk out of you,' exclaimed the man, relapsing into a fury. 'Take my draft, or go out of this.'

'Henry Evans!—your last game is played!'

I uttered the words very quietly. I had exhausted all other means to get back my own, and followed the advice of the writer of the letter in my extremity. They struck the gambler with utter dismay. His face became pale and distorted, and he reeled to and fro, as though a storm had suddenly burst upon the sunny sea.

'Who are you?' he asked in a low voice, after he had somewhat recovered.

'That is my concern. I know who you are.'

L'Estrange looked at me in a puzzled, expectant manner, as waiting for me to do something.

As I simply continued to return his stare, he at length said doggedly: 'What do you mean to do?'

'To take four hundred and fifteen pounds out of this place.'

He fixed his eyes upon me like a rat upon its captor: 'And afterwards?'

'Take care that you do not get hold of it again.' My answer completely confounded him.

Again he looked wonderingly, suspiciously at me. 'Look here,' he said. 'Are you going to hand me over at New York, if I give you the money?'

'No.'

'Will you promise? Will you swear it?'

'I will swear nothing; I will make no compact with a man of your character. I say simply, that if you give me my money, I leave you to be punished by other hands than mine.'

His eyes dropped to the floor, and he sat thinking awhile. Suddenly he rose up, and said half menacingly: 'I accept your terms.' Putting his hand into his breast-pocket, he pulled out a large leather case; from this he took a sheaf of Bank of England notes, and counted four hundred and fifteen pounds upon the sofa beside me.

'Count it for yourself,' he said.—'You may

test them as you like,' he added, as I examined the water-marks and then the 'touch' of the notes. 'They are genuine.'

'Yes, they are not forged, I perceive. Now I take my leave.'

'Before we part,' said L'Estrange with suppressed passion—'before we part, let me say that if you deal fair and square with me until we get ashore, I will let bygones be bygones. Remember this, however, that I have many friends, and that, if you put me to the necessity to find you, I will have you killed, even if I am in the fastest prison in the world. Even if you are the chief detective of England, you will not escape them that will find you.' There was no mistaking the fierce, revengeful nature of the man; evidently, he was capable of plotting the deadliest mischief.

'If you will just suppose that I have no further interest in you, that you are practically non-existent for me, then you will understand that your threats are waste of breath. Allow me to pass out.' With these words I quitted the cabin; and thus terminated the most remarkable interview of my life.

I was hurrying to tell Theodore of the astounding recovery of the money, and to remove the awful misery of the boy, when the thought occurred to me, that such a revelation might not be prudent. Theodore never could keep a secret, and he would, in spite of my cautioning, divulge the character of L'Estrange; and this might lead to unknown troubles and delays when we got to New York. Instead of going to our cabin, I returned to the deck, and walked about for a considerable time, planning a method of telling the story after we had got well on the way to California.

Having settled the matter to my satisfaction, I stood calmly watching the sun, poised over the western waters, for it was now evening. The placid ocean heaved in soft rolls, as if it were changed from water to oil. Upon them the effulgence glowed so marvellously that I held my breath in an ecstasy of delight. The world seemed almost too sublime for humanity, with all its baseness and mean contentions. A prayer of thanks and adoration burst from my lips. It was the first perfect sunset at sea that I had witnessed. In the full fervour of my emotion, a female form passed across the deck before me and eclipsed the sun. The incident annoyed me. Slowly the form passed, and the glowing orange fires fell dazzlingly upon my eyes again. But the charm of the scene was gone. The spell of nature's magic was not to be recovered by wishing. Again the female form eclipsed the sun. I turned to leave the deck. The figure advanced towards me. We had almost met, when I recognised the lady with whom I had formed the only acquaintance out of all the passengers. I was about to address her, when she passed me, as if totally oblivious of my presence. Wondering what I had done to deserve this slight, I turned to look after her, and almost collided with L'Estrange. He was pale as only extreme passion can blanch a man of full habit and sanguineous temperament. I thought he was irritated at meeting me; but beyond a darkling frown, he did not recognise me, and passed on.

Dinner had been served for some time, so that

the deck was almost bare of passengers. Not wishing to be slighted again by the lady, I went to the cabin entrance and sat down. A few minutes afterwards, the lady appeared; she threw an imploring glance upon me from her dark and sunken eyes, and descended the companion-stairs with a swiftness that was extraordinary for one so wasted by disease. Still more amazed by this behaviour than by the other, I stared after the retreating figure, when the burly body of L'Estrange blocked out the light from the doorway; for the fraction of an instant he seemed to hesitate; or, rather, I read the impulse that shot through him as he saw me. But he did not stop; like one following a beckoning hand, he disappeared.

I was astonished at the intensity of the emotion which these simple events caused. What was less uncommon than for an invalid lady to desire to have a few minutes' promenade at a quiet interval? If she 'cut' a very distant and chance acquaintance, surely she had the right to do so. Besides, many people behave eccentrically on board ship. But what did her terrified looks mean? Had her illness produced delirium? As for L'Estrange, nothing was more natural than that he should need a walk upon deck, after his excitement and discomfiture. Yet I could not get rid of the shadowy feeling that slowly grew upon me, that some dark link connected the man and woman who had passed from me, like living ghosts. Against the feeling, however, were the facts that I recalled. Did not L'Estrange say, when he and Theodore had broken in upon my conversation with the lady, that he did not know French? and both he and the lady appeared to be absolute strangers to each other. I continued to ponder over the conflict of our intuitions and the realities, which seem to destroy their significance, until the throng of people ascending from the dining-table ended my metaphysical occupation.

I went to see how Theodore was getting on. It was now dusk, and the lamps were being lit in the corridors. Stewards and other ships' servants were bustling about; passengers were moving towards their cabins and up the stairs. For a little while I could not make my way through the press; while thus fixed, I felt something placed in my hand. In the imperfect light and amid so many people, it was impossible to know who the giver was; and beyond the feeling that the object was a piece of paper, I was ignorant of what I had received. Having got free, I went to my cabin as fast as possible. I had had one mysterious and fateful missive before that day; and my natural cautiousness bade me wait until I was clear of observers, before examining the paper I held.

Theodore was sleeping in that heavy manner which follows great exhaustion of bodily and mental powers. I was greatly relieved. Gradually I raised the flame of the lamp and turned my eyes on the piece of paper. It was crumpled and damp by the hand that had conveyed it to me. The contents were as follows: 'Do not hold any conversation with your fellow-passengers for the rest of the voyage. Stay in your cabin as much as possible. When you reach New York, take the first train for the West. Dangerous men surround you. Keep

your brother under your eyes constantly. Do not reveal what has taken place to-day. Burn this, now that you have read it.'

The last injunction was the most difficult of all. I did not dare to strike a match. I tore the paper in the smallest fragments, and finding the port-hole of the little corridor still open, I threw the scraps away at short intervals.

Who was this strange correspondent that knew my affairs so intimately, and who was so eager to befriend me? I could not fix upon any one on the ship save the lady, with whom I had had two conversations only. If she was playing the part of guardian angel, why? Further, if she had written the two notes—and they were in the same handwriting—she must be connected with the desperadoes she warned me against! Could that poor, suffering, almost dying woman be one of the vilest pests of the human race? The mere idea seemed an insult to one so refined, so gentle, so compassionate. Undiscoverable, however, as the correspondent might be, I determined to follow the counsel I had received, and to the letter. In thirty or more hours we should be at New York; and under any circumstances I must keep Theodore constantly under my eye, until we were clear of those who had so many reasons to fear and to hate him, as well as myself.

But the unhappy boy had no wish to leave the cabin, or indeed his berth. Remorse devoured him with relentless tooth. He grew pale and haggard, as if in a rapid consumption. His grief was indeed terrible; and if I had dared, I would have told him all. Only the certainty, that in a few hours I could give relief to the anguish that he deemed hopeless, stayed me from saying: 'Sorrow no more, dear boy; the lost is found.'

At last we reached New York. I shall say nothing of my anxiety regarding Theodore, who had to be carried from the ship to a cab, so prostrate and despairing was he. I will only relate the concluding incident of our most momentous voyage, which cleared up the mystery of my unknown friend. It was a final note, hastily given to me as I took my seat beside my brother on leaving the steamship wharf. It was written in French, and ran thus:

'The language in which I bid you adieu for ever will enlighten you as to who I am. Through you, I have been able to do one good deed before going from this world, in which I have done so many evil ones. I thank heaven for the opportunity. I know that I only reach America to die. But I shall leave behind me one, who, though now lost in sin and devoted to the injury of his fellow-creatures, will yet have to die also. L'Estrange is that one—my husband. Now, I pray you, as I have been good to you, not to take any steps against him; I wish him to be with me in my last moments; perhaps then I may, by God's mercy, induce him to return to honour and honesty. He once was good and kind, though now a desperately wicked man. But, as I still possess some slight influence over him, he has promised me not to harm you. He knows that I revealed his real position to you; for the steward who gave you my first note told him afterwards. L'Estrange will not harm you; he has sworn it, upon what is sacred

to him. Have, therefore, no fears, and proceed to your destination calmly and in peace. If you ever recall my memory, pray for my peace beyond the grave. Adieu.'

It was many months before Theodore recovered from the illness which followed his escape on the Atlantic. Though matters had taken so providential a turn, and though I lavished upon him all my tenderness, he could not forgive himself. The bright, self-confident, self-assertive boy that left England was gone, and a grave, silent, gentle man had taken his place. But he is slowly gaining cheerfulness, as we prosper; and when my mother and sisters join us, I hope he will again be gay, for their dear sakes.

LAW-COURT INCIDENTS.

ANY one interested in the peculiarities of his fellow-man must needs find them strikingly exemplified in courts of justice; and the judge or barrister or any other person of any discrimination who has arrived at an old age in the service of a law-court, must possess a clear insight into the traits and peculiarities of mankind.

Nothing is so much appreciated in a court of justice as fun, and it is principally this aspect of the question that this paper intends to deal with. The solemnity with which they are generally associated, and the serious issues at stake, render wit or humour the more acceptable, as being a deviation from the beaten path of decorum. There are times, however, when levity is much out of place, although often indulged in; for instance, it is most inappropriate to find a barrister joking while the prisoner at the bar stands charged with murder; and the jokes of a judge who is constantly making fun, if any little opportunity presents itself, in the end fall flat, without leaving any appreciable effect, which is not the case when, now and then, this high functionary emits a remark which does not fail to call forth mirth and laughter.

A ready reply or a cutting sarcasm is sometimes used as a weapon of defence by a witness. Occasionally, even in the most unimportant case, he will be cross-examined by the opposing counsel to such an extent, that unless he be a clear-headed and thinking person, he will be liable to commit himself. This is one of the aims of counsel—to confuse the witnesses, and constantly remind them that they are on oath. Some indulge in the latter practice to an insufferable extent. O'Connell was conspicuous for his powers of examination, and of following up, if possible, any part of the evidence the witness endeavoured to evade. During a Munster circuit, he was engaged in a case where the question was the validity of a will, by which property to some amount was devised, but which the plaintiffs alleged was forged. O'Connell noticed that the subscribing witness during examination swore several times that 'the testator signed the will while life was in him.' Suspecting something, he asked the witness, 'Was it not that a live fly was in the dead man's mouth, while his hand was placed on the will?' The witness, through fear, actually confessed that this was the case.

A barrister named Missing was defending a prisoner charged with stealing a donkey, and was severe in his examination of the witness. The case was that the prosecutor had left the donkey tied to a gate, and on returning, it was gone. 'Do you mean to say, witness,' said Missing, 'the donkey was stolen?'—'I mean to say, sir,' was the reply, 'that the ass was missing.'

A witness may be obstructive, and give a barrister great trouble by refusing to answer questions put to him; but this method of procedure is not so effective as quick, sharp, and ready repartee.

An eminent English architect named Alexander was being examined by counsel, who was using every effort in his power to depreciate the witness's opinion.

'You are a builder, I believe?'

'No, sir; I am not a builder; I am an architect.'

'Ah, well, builder or architect, architect or builder—they are pretty much the same, I suppose?'

'I beg your pardon; they are totally different.'

'Oh, indeed. Perhaps you would state wherein this great difference consists.'

'An architect, sir, conceives the design, prepares the plan, draws out the specification—in short, supplies the mind. The builder is merely the machine; the architect, the power that puts the machine together and sets it going.'

'Oh, very well, Mr Architect; that will do. A very ingenious distinction, without a difference.—Do you happen to know who was the architect of the Tower of Babel?'

'There was no architect, sir—hence the confusion.'

'Which way did these stairs run?' a witness was once asked; and his reply was: 'That it depended on circumstances. If you were at the bottom, they run up; but if you are on the top, they run down.'

Curran was examining a witness, and failing to get a direct answer, said: 'There is no use in asking you questions, for I see the villain in your face.'

'Do you, sir?' said the man with a smile. 'Faix, I never knew my face was a looking-glass before!'

From the dock have issued at various times witty sayings and pert remarks; and it is not an uncommon occurrence to find prisoners whom pecuniary considerations prevent from employing counsel, exhibit wonderful tact and ingenuity on behalf of their cause. Doubtless, every one has heard of the Irishman, who, in reply to the question, 'Guilty or not guilty?' said, 'He would like to hear the evidence before he would plead.' Another native of the Emerald Isle raised a laugh in court by displaying a scar on his head about the size of the knob of a fire-shovel, which he considered conclusive testimony that he was married.

'Prisoner at the bar,' said a judge, 'is there anything you would wish to say before sentence is passed upon you?' The prisoner looked towards the door, and remarked that he would like to say 'good-evening,' if it was agreeable to the company.

The sayings and doings of the bench generally command more attention than anything which emanates from any other part of the court. Probably it is a kind of policy openly if not inwardly to appreciate the judge's jokes, on account of his high judicial position.

Some judges have been remarkable for their wit in giving decisions and for their eccentricity on the bench; Lords Ellenborough and Mansfield were notable examples. The latter judge once gave encouragement to a young barrister who had forgotten the speech he had probably committed to memory. 'The unfortunate client who appears by me,' he began—'the unfortunate client who appears by me—my lord, my unfortunate client'—'You can go on, sir,' said the judge, in an encouraging tone; 'so far, the court is entirely with you.'

One of the most noted criminal lawyers in the country, while pleading the cause of his client, is often overcome by his innocence and wrongs, and is obliged to sit down and recover himself. 'Don't you think,' said a judge to him, 'that the jury have found out your movements by this?'—'Ah, you forget,' said the barrister; 'it is always a new jury before whom I play.'

'If you don't stop that coughing,' said an irritable judge to an old gentleman in court, 'I will fine you one hundred pounds.'—'I will give your lordship two hundred, if you will stop it for me,' was the quick reply.

Such are a few incidents which have occurred in connection with the bright side of law-courts from time to time. But there is another aspect of the question. There are the serious issues at stake to be decided within the precincts of the building, which is so often the medium whence ensue wit, drollery, and fun. It would be wrong to suppose that mirth does not find a place, and that the sublime exists without the ridiculous. The very presence of the latter adds a charm to the former, and often chases away that dull monotony which we are apt to associate with law-courts and their surroundings.

MR CHUCKLES'S CHICKS.

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS.—ACT II.

As already stated in the previous chapter, Mr Chuckles left the house full of the laudable intention to see for himself that the fowls were properly secured in their receptacle. He arrived alongside the hamper at the same moment as the page Tiddlewinks; but both master and servant were too late—the birds had vacated their lodging.

Mr Chuckles glared at the woe-begone Tiddlewinks in so ferocious a manner as caused that hapless youth to try and remember where he had read that death by strangulation was easy, or otherwise.

'O you hardened young villain!' at length gasped Mr Chuckles; 'what do you mean?' and the enraged man extended his right index finger dramatically towards the deserted hamper.

'Ple-e-se, sir, it ain't my fault, sir, I'm sure sir,' whimpered the quaking page.

'Not your fault? Why weren't you here

sooner? Answer that, you young brimstone.—But hold! I will not listen to your miserable excuses,' shouted Mr Chuckles, and at the same time looking around, with the view of discovering, if possible, the whereabouts of his erratic birds. 'Ah!' he exclaimed, as his eyes rested upon that side of the garden which was next to the domain of the dreaded Major Ironlungs, 'there they are!'

There could not be the slightest possible doubt the cochins were most undesirably near the low fence separating the two gardens. What was the best course to pursue? It would certainly never do to alarm the newly escaped birds unnecessarily, for should they become unduly excited, the chances were that they would at once pay a flying visit to the grounds of the choleric son of Mars. Some such thoughts as these were evidently passing rapidly through the brain of the perplexed Chuckles, as he stood gazing at his chicks, which were serenely unconscious of the perplexing interest that their wayward behaviour had aroused in the breast of their new owner, and energetically continued their congenial occupation of scratching up a recently sown patch of flower-seeds.

At length a ray of light pierced Mr Chuckles's bald cranium. 'Tiddlewinks,' said he, 'go and hide behind a gooseberry bush, as near to the hamper as you can get; and then when you see the birds return and get into it, creep out softly, and bang down the lid as sharp as you can.'

'When I see 'em a-gettin' into the 'amper, sir!' exclaimed Tiddlewinks, grinning; 'but I don't think as I ever shall see 'em get into it.'

'None of your insolence to me, you chattering magpie; do as I tell you.—I am now going into the house; and hark you, if anything peculiar happens, come and inform me instantly, or it will be the worse for you.'

'Yessir,' meekly replied the youth, who, as soon as he saw the retreating form of his master disappear from view, began to indulge in a species of Zulu war-dance, or exaggerated 'cellar flap,' which calisthenic exercise, although doubtless much appreciated, in festive moments, by his chums of the distinguished order of 'buttons,' was not exactly calculated to meet with approval from a number of shy fowls. Therefore, what happened under the circumstances was not a matter for much surprise. The 'old bird' whose peculiarity has been alluded to, by a kind of half-flying, half-jumping movement, succeeded in locating itself on the other side of the fence exactly in the centre of a promising clump of tender annuals; whither it was of course immediately followed by the majority of its fellow-birds.

When Tiddlewinks saw what had happened, he suspended his healthy exercise as suddenly as he had begun it, and stood staring, in a semi-imbecile manner, at the cochins, which had so unceremoniously transferred themselves over the way. 'Wot a rare go!' at length gasped out the bewildered youth. 'Won't there be a game just, and no mistake! When that there major sees 'em, he'll be on the rampage. Wot's to be done? Oh, I remember. The guv'nor said as how if anything peculiar took place, I was to let him know directly; so, as this is a very rare start, I'll be off and tell him.'

Suiting the action to the word, the page began to proceed leisurely towards the house; but had scarcely got twenty yards in that direction, when his footsteps were arrested by a stentorian voice in his rear calling: 'Hi, hi! you boy there—you in buttons, confound you! Come back, I say, and explain the meaning of those abominable fowls being in my garden, or, by Jove, I'll put an ounce of lead into you.'

'The major!' gasped Tiddlewinks, instinctively changing his slow march into a stampede.

Mr Chuckles was busily employed upon a plan for a proposed henhouse, when his page burst unceremoniously into the room in a state of breathlessness—the combined result of terror and unwonted exercise. The domestic architect thus rudely disturbed in the midst of his weighty labours, directed towards the intruder a look of stern inquiry.

'The major!' exclaimed the distressed youth in piteous tones.

'Well, what of the major? What is the matter with the major? Has he been seized with an apoplectic fit, through giving way to violent passion?' inquired Mr Chuckles grimly.

'No, sir—not a fit, sir; but the cochin-chiners, sir'—

'Ah, the fowls; what of them? Have they returned into the hamper?'

'O lor, no, sir,' responded Tiddlewinks, who had by this time recovered his breath. 'I only wishes as they had, sir.'

'I left you in charge of those birds,' said Mr Chuckles, 'and woe betide you, should they have gone astray!—Now, tell me instantly, where are they?'

'That's just wot it is, sir,' answered the page with desperation.

'I have every desire to be calm and temperate in my language,' gravely remarked Mr Chuckles; 'but if you do not immediately explain that last remark of yours, I shall most certainly be obliged to behave in a manner more forcible than polite.'

'Yes, sir, that's just wot—I mean, sir, that them birds has got into the major's garding and is a-routin' of it up, sir.'

'Then they must be got back again at all risks,' said Mr Chuckles in a 'do-or-die' tone of voice.

'Yes, sir, please, sir. But the major knows all about it, sir; he's seen 'em, and said he would put a hounce of lead into me, sir.'

'Oh, he used threatening language, did he?' remarked Mr Chuckles with quite a magisterial air.—'H'm, I think you may retire now, while I just think over what is the best to be done under the peculiar circumstances.'

The youth required no second bidding, but quitted the room with praiseworthy alacrity, only too pleased to be let off so easily.

'Yes, Mr Featherwell, you have accomplished a nice day's work with your present of poultry,' soliloquised the irate Chuckles as he paced up and down the room. 'But I will be even with you, sir; I'll "owe you one," as the man says in the play.'

Could he but have guessed that whilst he was vowing vengeance against the giver of the cochins, that generous individual was being

quietly united in the holy bonds of wedlock to his only daughter!

'I think,' mused Mr Chuckles, 'it will be the wisest course to see the major, and endeavour to induce him to look upon the invasion of his flower-beds as a circumstance that could not be very well avoided, and as such, to treat the matter in a philosophical light.' And he turned to depart upon his mission; but just as he stepped upon the terrace outside, he beheld, to his dismay, the podgy form of Major Ironlungs advancing by rapid strides towards the house. In another minute, the two neighbours stood facing each other.

'Ah, major, you here!' began Mr Chuckles in his blandest manner. 'So unexpected a visit from so distinguished a personage is, you know'—

'Don't try to humbug me, sir,' sharply interrupted the gallant but rude defender of hearths and homes.

'My dear major, I have not the slightest intention of "humbugging" you.'

'I should think not, indeed; it's not to be done, sir.—Look you here now; I am a man of few words; I like to come to the point at once, even if it be the point of the sword.' As the major uttered these words, there came, borne by the breeze, a lively cackling of fowls. 'Do you hear that abominable din, sir?' asked the man-of-war of Mr Chuckles.

That gentleman admitted that he was not entirely indifferent to the sounds referred to, at the same time excusing the conduct of the poultry on the ground that it was the natural vocation of chanticleers to proclaim the morn.

'Proclaim the fiddlestick, sir!' exclaimed the major. 'Rubbish! Cock-crowing time is at this period of the year four A.M.'

'Well, then, luncheon-time, if it will be more agreeable to you, major,' insinuated Mr Chuckles.

'Nothing can be agreeable to me, sir, but satisfaction,' replied the major, frowning fiercely.

'My dear major, you shall have it!'

'That's right, sir. I respect you for speaking out like a man, sir. Let us go immediately to the bottom of the garden.'

'N-n-not in the garden, I think, major; we will have it in the room—this room; just a cold snack on a tray, you know.'

'Cold snack on a tray! Why, do you wish to pretend, sir, that you are unaware of the object of my coming here? What do you think I climbed over those wretched palings for?'

'To say truth, major,' answered Mr Chuckles with the calmness of desperation, 'I cannot comprehend why you should put yourself to such inconvenience all on account of such a humble individual as myself.'

'Do these abominable cochon-chinas now in my garden belong to you, sir?' demanded the irate warrior in measured tones.

'They do. That is, they'—

'Quite sufficient, sir. They are your property; you admit the fact. Then, pray, allow me to inform you that the flowers which just now are being rooted up by your miserable fowls, are cultivated by me at no trifling cost.' And the major 'threw out' his chest and endeavoured to add an inch or two to his stumpy figure.

'My dear major,' said Mr Chuckles, 'I shall be only too glad to'—

'Give me the satisfaction of a gentleman, eh?'

'I will pay anything'—

'Pay, sir! don't talk to me of pay! Insult to Major Ironlungs can only be wiped out in one way, sir, and that is by—blood! Will you meet me in the *duello*?' quoth the podgy warrior in grandiose tones.

'Major Ironlungs,' replied the peacefully inclined Chuckles with a calmness of demeanour which did him infinite credit, 'you are of course well aware that an enlightened age has condemned the *duello*, as you term it; and, however much I might feel inclined'—

'Ah, but you don't feel inclined, I can plainly see,' interrupted the major.

'To,' continued Mr Chuckles, ignoring the interruption—'to accede to your request, I am afraid the opportunity for us to maim or kill each other would not be easily found, though we might, I daresay, take an excursion across the Channel. I'll think the matter over, Major Ironlungs.'

Now, a close observer would have detected a look of disappointed surprise in the eyes of the gallant major; just as though he had received an answer which he neither expected nor desired. The warrior turned to depart, and as he proceeded down the path, cried out: 'I intend to have a shot at the old bird, to get my hand in a bit.' He was evidently desirous of disconcerting his (probably) prospective antagonist by an assumption of bounce and Brummagem bluster.

Mr Chuckles sought the repose of his easy-chair, and ensconced in its springy depths, freely made use of his pocket-handkerchief in the performance of that operation commonly known as 'mopping' his shining cranium. 'Phew!' he ejaculated, 'how warm it is, to be sure! What a fool I have been! Only to think that I, Christopher Chuckles, have almost undertaken to fight a sanguinary duel with that brimstone old reprobate next door. It is simply ridiculous, now I come to think of it coolly and calmly. Society is strongly against the barbarous custom; and as I am a respectable and a respected member of society, and a good Christian, how can I conscientiously countenance a practice which the world, in common with myself, emphatically taboos?' The worthy man derived much comfort from these reflections, and thereafter made up his mind that he would not gratify the major by standing before him as a living target, to be 'bulls-eyed' or 'innered,' as the case might be.

'Did I not hear Major Ironlungs in conversation, or rather, I think, altercation, with you, Christopher, dear?' asked Mrs Chuckles as she entered the room.

'Well, Maria, I rather imagine you did.'

'I thought the major was speaking in somewhat elevated tones. What was it all about, dear?'

'Fighting, Maria?'

'Fighting!' echoed Mrs Chuckles. 'Oh, I suppose he was describing to you some of his mighty exploits on the field of battle?'

'No, Maria; he did not allude to his past

sanguinary career.—The fact is, my dear,' continued Mr Chuckles solemnly, 'Major Ironlungs has challenged me to fight a duel.'

'And you?' gasped Mrs Chuckles.

'I, Maria, as a family man, feel it my duty not to oblige that bellicose individual.'

'Ah!' sighed Mrs Chuckles, as she staggered, half fainting, and was only just saved in time by the stalwart arms of her lord and master.

'Hillo, Maria! do hold up. I say'—Here Mr Chuckles came to a sudden stop as the loud report of a gun smote his ear. The crash of firearms had an instant revivifying effect on the apparently unconscious Mrs Chuckles, for she quickly opened her eyes, and gave every sign of restoration, to the no small relief of her panting husband, who seized the opportunity to deposit his fair (but stout) burden in the easy-chair.

'That noise, Christopher, it—it was like a gun going off,' murmured the poor lady feebly.

'You are right, Maria; it was the report of a gun.'

'Oh, do say you're not shot Christopher, dear—do, for my sake—do say you are not killed,' she implored.

Mr Chuckles was extremely happy in being in a sufficiently live state to inform his sympathising partner that he was *not* perforated by any deadly missile, and as much for his own sake as for hers.

'Saved, saved!' exclaimed the grateful woman as she rose from her seat, and was about to entwine her arms round her Christopher's neck, when the conjugal intention was frustrated by the appearance once more on the scene of Tiddlewinks in a state of wild terror and with something like a limp in his gait.

'Oh, p-please, sir,' cried the scared youth, 'I'm ki-killed—I know I am; send for the 'orspital.'

'What is the matter?' simultaneously asked his master and mistress.

'It's all along o' that Major Hironlungs. He vos a-aimin' at the old bird, but he missed him; and he's 'it me instead, and it's horful!' blurted out the stricken youth in apparent agony.

'Poor boy,' said Mrs Chuckles sympathetically; and her husband, who had a shrewd guess that the page was more frightened than hurt, observed that substantial compensation for personal injury might possibly be wrung out of the perpetrator of the deed, and with that object in view he should communicate with his solicitor. As the indignant master of the maltreated 'buttons' announced this determination, who should appear on the scene but the major himself, apparently, from the blue-red appearance of his visage, on the point of being seized with apoplexy, and carrying his gun in a manner not at all calculated to inspire any one with unlimited confidence in the bearer's knowledge of the precise use of firearms.

'I've done it!' exclaimed the intruder grimly, bringing down the butt-end of his gun heavily on to the floor and glaring wildly upon those around him.

'Yes,' said Mr Chuckles, with dignified calmness, 'you *have* done it. Gaze upon that poor boy there, the victim of your inaccurate aim.'

'See here, guv'nor,' whimpered the injured individual alluded to. 'When next you goes for to aim at a co-cochin-chiner, don't you go for to hit a hinnercent cove like me.'

'You wretched offshoot of brimstone,' cried the infuriated major, 'how dare you insinuate that my gun-practice is not—er—what it should be? When I was in the'—

Before the affronted marksman could splutter out the remainder of his speech, the door was quickly opened, and Mr Frank Featherwell entered the room, closely followed by Mary Ellen, who was hanging her pretty little head, and blushing in the most bewitchingly becoming manner, like the conscious culprit she undoubtedly considered herself. The addition to the little party affected the latter in various ways. Mr Chuckles stared and frowned upon Frank; whilst the major looked askance at the donor of untamed poultry. Mrs Chuckles 'caught' her daughter's eye; and nods and wreathed smiles, with other signs, were freely passed between the pair in quick and (evidently) intelligible succession.

'Pray, do not let us interrupt the harmony,' said Frank in a cheerful and airy manner.—'I think, Major Ironlungs,' he went on, 'you were speaking as I opened the door, and, if I am not much mistaken, the words which fell upon my ear were, "when I was in the"— Proceed, my dear major; do not deprive us of your doubtless interesting reminiscences.'

'I was merely going to mention the fact,' said the major, in a considerably subdued manner, 'that when I was in the army'—

'Pardon me, major,' interrupted Frank, smilingly, 'but I'm somewhat of a stickler for accuracy; was it not in that branch of the auxiliary forces known as the militia, where—?'

'Well, sir, and pray, what if it were the militia?' and the sometime member of that excellent but often derided branch of England's brave defenders scowled savagely, and did not seem to be altogether at his ease.

'Only the militia!' exclaimed Mrs Chuckles in contemptuous tones; whilst that young imp Tiddlewinks indulged himself by screwing up his face into an assortment of new and improved grimaces.

'A militiaman after all!' observed Mr Chuckles, sticking his thumbs into his waistcoat armholes in the approved manner, at the same time throwing out his chest. 'Why, I think I'm equal to a soldier of *that* calibre; so I advise you, Mr Militiaman, to keep that weapon of yours quiet, before accident number two happens.'

'Do you?' sneeringly returned the major.

'Why, cert'nly,' facetiously answered Mr Chuckles, gaining confidence as 'the enemy's' increasing discomfiture became apparent; 'at all events in my house, sir. If you really think that a few extra firing-drills would improve your practice, go and practise on your own domestics.'

'In course,' ventured to remark the now excessively delighted and grinning 'buttons,' whose injuries had been purely imaginary; 'and mind you take better aim—yah!'

The discomfited blusterer divined that if he stayed any longer, he would be pretty certain to hear things said of him which would by no

means conduce to his serenity of mind, so he shouldered his gun, and giving a final glare all round, beat a hasty retreat, followed by the smiles of all.

'And now,' said Mr Chuckles, turning with an air of authority to Frank and the fair runaway, 'pray, what is the meaning of this?'

'O pa, dear, do forgive us!' pleaded the brand-new bride; 'it was all my fault, it was, really.'

'Forgive? Your fault? *What* is your fault?' queried the perplexed Chuckles.

'The fact is,' said Frank, stepping forward to the relief of his bride, and holding out his hand to his newly made father-in-law, 'me—I—that is—and your daughter—dear Mary Ellen—are married!'

'Married!' exclaimed Mr Chuckles. 'How? When? Where?'

'My dear—father—in the usual way—half an hour ago—at the little church round the corner,' promptly answered Frank, delighted and surprised that the old gentleman took the matter so quietly.

'Without my consent, eh, you young—?'

'Well—er—you see, sir—circumstances'—

'What is the state of your exchequer, sir?' interrupted Mr Chuckles, looking more severely than he had as yet done.

Frank, who had naturally anticipated some such question, evidently appeared fully prepared with a satisfactory answer. 'I regret,' said he, 'to inform you that, just before leaving home this morning, I received a telegram which informed me of the demise of a distant cousin, whom I had not seen, or ever heard from, for many years, and who has evidently been so pleased with me for never troubling him, that it appears he has bequeathed to me—no doubt out of pure gratitude—his little fortune—about twelve thousand pounds.'

'Well, my dear boy,' exclaimed Chuckles *père* with considerable effusion, 'I suppose I must offer my congrats— No; I don't mean that—my sincere sympathy in your bereavement, ahem!'

Then followed a good time all round of hand-shaking and hugging and kissing; 'all over the shop,' as Tiddlewinks afterwards vulgarly expressed himself to the housemaid and cook.

At the termination of this exercise, Mr Chuckles drew his new-found son-in-law on one side, and whispered: 'But I say, Frank, my boy, wasn't the present of poultry—especially the old bird—a dodge, eh?'

'Well—er—you see'—began the young fellow in a hesitating manner.

'Out with it! don't be afraid,' urged the now benignant father-in-law; 'all is ended happily. The fact is, I was partly prepared'—

'Candidly then, sir, it was a—a—sort of what you might call ruse,' admitted Frank. 'Pray, forgive'—

'Forgive, my dear boy! There is nothing requiring forgiveness; I can but admire your masterly strategy. See what has come out of it! A blustering, bouncing ex-major of militia utterly routed; a good husband gained for my only child; and I have found a sterling son-in-law. What more can we poor mortals expect?'

Frank smiled quietly, and wondered how his 'masterly strategy' would have been appreciated,

had not the unexpected good fortune which had so timely befallen him been put into the scale against Mr Chuckles's Chicks.

TEA AS PREPARED IN THE EAST.

The Hunnias (Himalayan natives) drink tea which comes from China in small packets, made up of the large leaves, small branches, seeds, &c., forming a mass reduced to the smallest possible size by pressure, and rendered sometimes still more compact by a slight addition of sheep's blood. The Hunnias travel great distances, living only on tea and what the Hindus call *suttoo*—that is, flour made from roasted beans or peas. To prepare the tea, they boil the leaves for some hours—all night, in fact, if they are in camp—in a small earthen pot; then they pour out the infusion into a large basin full of hot water, adding some salt and clarified butter (ghee), if they happen to have it. All these naturally make a kind of soup; and the natives can live on it several months, and undergo severe fatigue without taking any other nourishment.

'The method adopted by the Mongols and other Tartar tribes for the preparation of tea in bricks is,' says Johnston, in his *Chemistry of Common Life*, 'it is believed, that which extracts from the leaves the greatest possible amount of nourishment. They scrape the tea into fine powder, and boil it in the alkaline water of the steppes, adding some fat and salt, after which they pour off the liquid, leaving the deposit. They drink twenty, even forty, glasses of this liquor in the day, mixing in it some honey and butter with a little roast-meat; but with only a little milk instead of the meat, they can subsist many weeks with this drink for sole sustenance.'

IF I WERE YOU.

WHY did he look so grave? she asked.

What might the trouble be?

'My little maid,' he sighing said,

'Suppose that you were me,

And you a weighty secret owned,

Pray, tell me what you'd do?'

'I think I'd tell it somebody,'

Said she, 'if I were you!'

But still he sighed and looked askance,

Despite her sympathy.

'Oh, tell me, little maid,' he said

Again, 'if you were me,

And if you loved a pretty lass,

O then, what would you do?'

'I think I'd go and tell her so,'

Said she, 'if I were you!'

'My little maid, 'tis you,' he said,

'Alone are dear to me.'

Ah then, she turned away her head,

And ne'er a word said she.

But what he whispered in her ear,

And what she answered too—

O no, I cannot tell you this;

I'd guess, if I were you!

G. CLIFTON BINGHAM.

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